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ABSTRACT

The use and abuse of alcohol by college students has sparked the interest of higher education administrators in recent years. The Student Drinking Information Questionnaire was administered to 456 undergraduate and graduate students at a large midwestern university in an effort to collect relevant information that would form the basis of an alcohol education program. The results revealed that 90 percent of respondents reported drinking alcohol; women were more likely to drink wine, while men were more likely to drink beer. Students also reported hangovers, drinking and driving, missing classes, and blackouts. Responding in a socially desirable manner appeared to have played a role in attitudes toward others' drinking behavior. Other reported attitudes suggested that alcohol was used to get drunk, relax, have fun, or socialize. Results from a section on knowledge indicated that respondents had some information about alcohol use and its effects, but less information about specific statistical or technical/physiological effects. The reported consumption patterns, alcohol-related behaviors and attitudes pointed to the feasibility of an alcohol education program. (Nine data tables are included which present responses by sex.) (NRB)

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ALCOHOL USE AMONG STUDENTS AT A LARGE MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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The use and abuse of beverage alcohol by college students has sparked the interest and concern of higher education administrators in recent years. Much of this concern has led to the development of alcohol education programs on a number of campuses across the country. The National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (N.I.A.A.A.) furded model alcohol education programs at 4 universities, as part of its 50 + 12 Program (N.I.A.A.A., 1975). These programs were intended to provide ideas as well as evaluations of a variety of methods for educating university students about alcohol, with the hopes of diminishing the amount of alcohol abuse that occurs on campuses.

A recent review of alcohol education efforts by Oblander (1984) suggests that, while a variety of programs have been developed and evaluated, the impact of these results have either been poorly evaluated, yield insignificant changes, or have not been evaluated at all. It seems we don't really know a great deal about combating alcohol abuse on college campuses.

In the Fall of 1981, a group of administrators and staff at a large Mid-Western university met to discuss alcohol use on the campus, and strategies for developing an alcohol program. Rather than institute a program without knowing the facts about that particular campus, the authors of this paper were charged with collecting relevant information that would form the basis of a program. This paper describes one part of this fact-finding endeavor. Other information collected included Resident Advisors' perceptions of alcohol use and abuse in residence halls, and a

compilation of alcohol education efforts at 27 other universities (Keane & Swinford, 1982).

Methods

The Student Drinking Information Questionnaire (S.D.I.Q.), adopted from surveys used by Gerardo Gonzales (1978) and Ruth Engs (1975), was administered to 456 undergraduate and graduate students. A random sample of classes, with less than 70 students per class, were used to obtain the sample. Demographic information about the sample are found on Table 1. Chi-square analysis indicated that the sample was not representative of the university population; it was over-represented by upper class students, graduate and professional students, and females. Given the results from other surveys of this type, the sample most likely yielded more conservative results than a more representative sample would have.

Results

The survey was divided into 4 sections: Consumption Patterns, Drinking Behaviors, Drinking Attitudes and Knowledge About Alcohol. The results and a discussion of each of these sections are presented below.

Consumption Patterns:

Of a total of 456 students responding, 410 or 90% reported drinking alcohol; this included 215 or 91% of the females and 197 or 90% of the males. Of these who reported not presently drinking alcohol, 6% reported drinking alcohol at some time in the past.

Actual self-reported drinking behavior of the students surveyed was found in Section II of the questionnaire. The results indicated that on a given drinking occasion, of those students drinking beer, 30.2% had one or two 12 oz. cans of beer (23.7% of the males, 36.3% of the females); 30.5% had two or three 12 oz. cans of beer (33% men and 28.3% women). (Table 2). While 25.6% of the total beer drinkers were having four or more cans of beer on any given occasion, 38.7% were males and only 13.7% were females. Of the 13.5% who never drank beer, only 4.6% were male while 21.7% were female. This information would lead one to the conclusion that, although information regarding length of time of any drinking occasion was not specified, over a quarter of the students were having four or more drinks during a drinking session.

An opposite trend was seen with wine consumption. (Table 3). Of the 410 students responding, 63 or 15.3% didn't drink wine, 24.4% of these being male and only 7% of the females. On any given occasion, 48% reported drinking one or two glasses of wine (5 oz.), 41.5% men and 54% women. Two or three glasses were drunk on any occasion by 30.8% of the total (28% male, 33.3% female). Four or more glasses of wine were consumed by 5.9% of the students, 6.2% of the males and 5.6% of the females. It appears from these and the above results that on a given occasion much more beer is being consumed, with 25.6% of the beer drinkers having four or more 12 oz. cans of beer while only 5.9% of the wine drinkers have four or more glasses (5 oz.) of wine.

The next question asked, "On occasions when you drink alcoholic beverages, if you drink mixed drinks containing distilled spirits, how

many mixed drinks do you usually have?" The results were as follows (Table 4): 12% reported never having mixed drinks, 15.5% of the men and 8.9% of the women. Of those consuming mixed drinks (346 individuals), 31.9% would have one or two drinks (24.7% of the men and 38.3% of the women); 39% would have two or three drinks (34% of the men and 43.5% of the women). Four or more mixed drinks were reported to have been consumed by 17.2% of the sample (25.8% males and 9.3% females).

One question that yielded interesting results indicated that 52% of the sample reported never drinking "straight" distilled liquor; this total included 36.1% of the men and 66.2% of the women. Of the women who did report drinking straight shots, none reported drinking four or more on a given occasion, while 11% of the men reported drinking four or more straight shots on an occasion (5.2% of the total, Table 5).

Another question asked, "On occasions when you drink alcoholic beverages, how many hours long is your typical drinking occasion?" Results (Table 6) were as follows: 26.4% reported drinking for one or two hours, this included 22.5% of the men and 29.9% of the women; drinking occasions of two or three hours were reported by 40.3% of the men, 39.3% of the women and 39.8% of the total. Spending four or more hours on a typical drinking occasion was reported by 32.6% of the total. This was made up of 36.1% of the males and 29.4% of the females. It appears from these results that approximately one-third of the sample considered a typical drinking occasion to be at least four hours in length.

The final question (Table 7) in the Consumption section of the questionnaire related to frequency of drinking in times per month. More

than half (52.1%) of the total reported drinking four or more times per month (55.4% of the males and 49.1% of the females). Drinking one or two times per month was reported by 23.1% of the total; this consisted of 20% of the males sampled and 25.9% of the females. These findings suggest that more than half of the sample was "going drinking" at least once a week.

These results appear to give the picture of a sample that drinks more beer and mixed drinks than wine or straight liquor. Women, however, were more likely to consume wine if they drink any type of alcohol, while for men, beer was the most popular beverage. The findings may lead to a conclusion that fewer than half of the sample ever drink straight liquor, but it was more popular with men than women. Time spent on a typical drinking occasion was reported by approximately a third of the population as being more than three hours in length, and these occasions seem to occur at least four times a month.

Drinking Behaviors:

When asked several questions regarding behaviors relating to drinking over the past year, interesting results were reported. Only percentages of the total will be discussed. If the reader wishes to see male/female breakdown, they can be found in Table 8.

When asked if they had had a hangover within the past year, 15.9% reported one time during the past year, 15.9% reported two times, 10.3% said three times and 31.1% said four or more times. The results for the statement "I have driven a car when I knew that I had too much to

drink", were: 15.6% once, 6.6% twice, 3.7% three times, and 9.5% four or more times during the past year. When asked about missing class because of a hangover during the past year, 10.8% reported once, 5.9% said two times, 1.7% answered three times, while 9.8% said four or more times. The following question related to property damage, pulling fire alarms, etc.: 4.2% of the sample had engaged in such activity during the past year, 3.7% twice, .7% three times and 2.2% four or more times. Interestingly, females did not report this behavior occurring three or more times. When asked about "blackouts" (not remembering what had happened while drinking), 17.4% said it happened once during the past year, 8.6% of the total drinkers said twice, 3.2% reported three times and 7.1% said four or more times. Having done something while drinking which was later regretted was reported as having happened once in the past year by 20.8% of the total, two times by 12.3%, three times by 5.4%, and four or more times by 8.1%.

The survey did not determine whether the same individual was reporting more than one of the above behaviors as having occurred more than four times in the past year. In general, responding to a number of these drinking behavior items with the relatively high frequency of four or more times a year could be indicative of a drinking problem. The survey was not designed to assess this aspect of drinking behavior.

Drinking Attitudes:

The next section of the study was concerned with attitudes toward drinking. Since the survey was a self-report measure, the results only indicated what the individual believed about their attitudes, whether

these attitudes are expressed in behaviors is unknown. Several items were answered with the obvious "right" answer, a few examples of these items are: 96% of the sample reported "respect a person's choice to abstain from drinking alcohol" as being "likely", yet it is not known how often drinks are offered and reoffered to those choosing to abstain, or how self-selecting are drinking groups. Another 55% reported they were likely to "express displeasure to someone who has had too much to drink at a party". However, excess drinking is often encouraged because the person becomes "more entertaining". When asked about "getting involved in trying to help a friend or associate who has a drinking problem", the "socially appropriate" answer of "likely" was marked by 71% of the total. Again, the question of "seek help if you thought you had a drinking problem", 87% marked one of the two likely responses. This would also be the "appropriate" answer, and may or may not reflect actual behavior.

Table 9 outlines the results of a few of the attitudes that were thought to be interesting. While the table gives total, male, and female percentages, only totals will be discussed here. Statements were responded to on a 4 point Likert scale, with a range from very unlikely to very likely.

When asked "When you drink, how likely are you to drink..... for escape from daily problems or school?", 3.2% reported somewhat unlikely, while 60.9% gave very unlikely as their response. For the item "to relax and have fun", 90.3% of the total responded in the two likely categories, only 3.4% said somewhat unlikely, and 6.3% very unlikely. 73.6% reported being either very likely or somewhat likely to drink "for the taste"; lit-

tle difference was seen between males and females on this item. However, of the 13% reporting it was very likely they drink "to get high or drunk", 20.2% of the males responding very likely and just 7.5% of the females; 25.9% of the total responded somewhat likely; 23.6% responded somewhat unlikely and 36.9% very unlikely. For the item "use alcohol as the primary focus of a socializing event", 10.1% of the total responded very likely, 31.2% of the total somewhat likely, 23.1% somewhat unlikely and 35.6% very unlikely. Responses to "chug drinks for the stronger effect", were 2.5% of the total very likely, and 9.8% of the total somewhat likely. The unlikely categories combined to 87.7% of the total. When asked "Where you drink, how likely are you to drink alcohol primarily to get drunk?", the total response in the likely categories was 24.2%, while the rest responded in the unlikely categories.

The results from the attitude portion of the survey provided important information. Responding in a socially desirable manner appears to have played a role in attitudes towards others' drinking behavior. Other attitudes that were very likely to occur in relatively high proportions suggest that alcohol is used to get drunk, to relax and have fun, and is a part of socializing events; a fairly significant proportion are somewhat likely or are very likely to drink to get high or drunk. It is difficult to draw specific conclusions about these findings; however, it seems clear that the alcohol was not used primarily in a typically "social" manner by a number of the respondents.

Knowledge

The section focusing on knowledge regarding alcohol yielded interesting results. Of the 12 knowledge items, 6 were answered correctly by a majority of students, while the other six were primarily answered "don't know". The "don't know" responses were found primarily in the areas regarding drinking and driving (i.e., "approximately 10% of fatal highway accidents are alcohol related"; "a blood level concentration of 0.10 is the legal definition of alcohol intoxification in most states in regard to driving"). The other items that students did not know the answer to revolved around physiological effects of alcohol and were more technical in nature (i.e., "it takes about as many hours as the number of drinks consumed to completely burn up the alcohol ingested"; "a 1 1/4 oz. shot of whiskey contains the same amount of alcohol as a 5 oz. glass of table wine or a 12 oz. can of beer"). About half of the respondents did not know the answer to these types of questions.

It appears as though the students who responded to the survey have some information about alcohol use and its effects, but are less knowledgeable about specific statistical or technical/physiological information.

Discussion

The survey was undertaken to provide information about the use and abuse of alcohol on a college campus. The information was to be used to determine the need for an alcohol program, as well as the extent and direction of such a program. While the results did not evidence any "sur-

prises", the consumption patterns, alcohol-related behaviors and attitudes pointed to the feasibility of a program.

It was apparent from the results that the students sampled were not aware of some very basic alcohol facts that could influence their consumption patterns as well as some of the unhealthy behaviors that may have resulted from their consumption. For example, ignorance of the fact that a can of beer contains the same amount of pure alcohol as a 1 1/2 oz. shot of whiskey or a 5 oz. glass of wine, may lead to the belief that "I can drink a lot of beer; it's not as strong as a shot". Perhaps the finding that beer is most likely to be consumed by men is related to this lack of knowledge.

The results also point out that consumption patterns and knowledge are not the only areas that need to be targeted with an alcohol program. The relationship between attitudes that support heavy drinking (i.e., "to get drunk, to get high") and negative, self-defeating behaviors (i.e., drunk driving, hangovers, not remembering) needs to be made.

In conclusion, the results of this initial survey suggested a variety of topics and areas that needed to be addressed in an alcohol program. The survey provided the background information indicating the need for a program, as well as point out likely directions for it to take.

Table 1

Demographics

N=456

Male	219	48%
Female	236	52%

Racial Background

White (Caucasian)	405	89%
Black (Negro)	10	2%
Oriental	28	6%
Other	11	2%

School Classification

Freshman	28	6%
Sophomore	54	12%
Junior	114	25%
Senior	154	34%
Graduate	101	22%
Professional	3	7%

Housing Status

University Housing	123	27%
Rented house or apartment	237	52%
Fraternity-Sorority	46	10%
Privately owned home	46	10%

Student Status

Full Time	435	95%
Part Time	21	5%

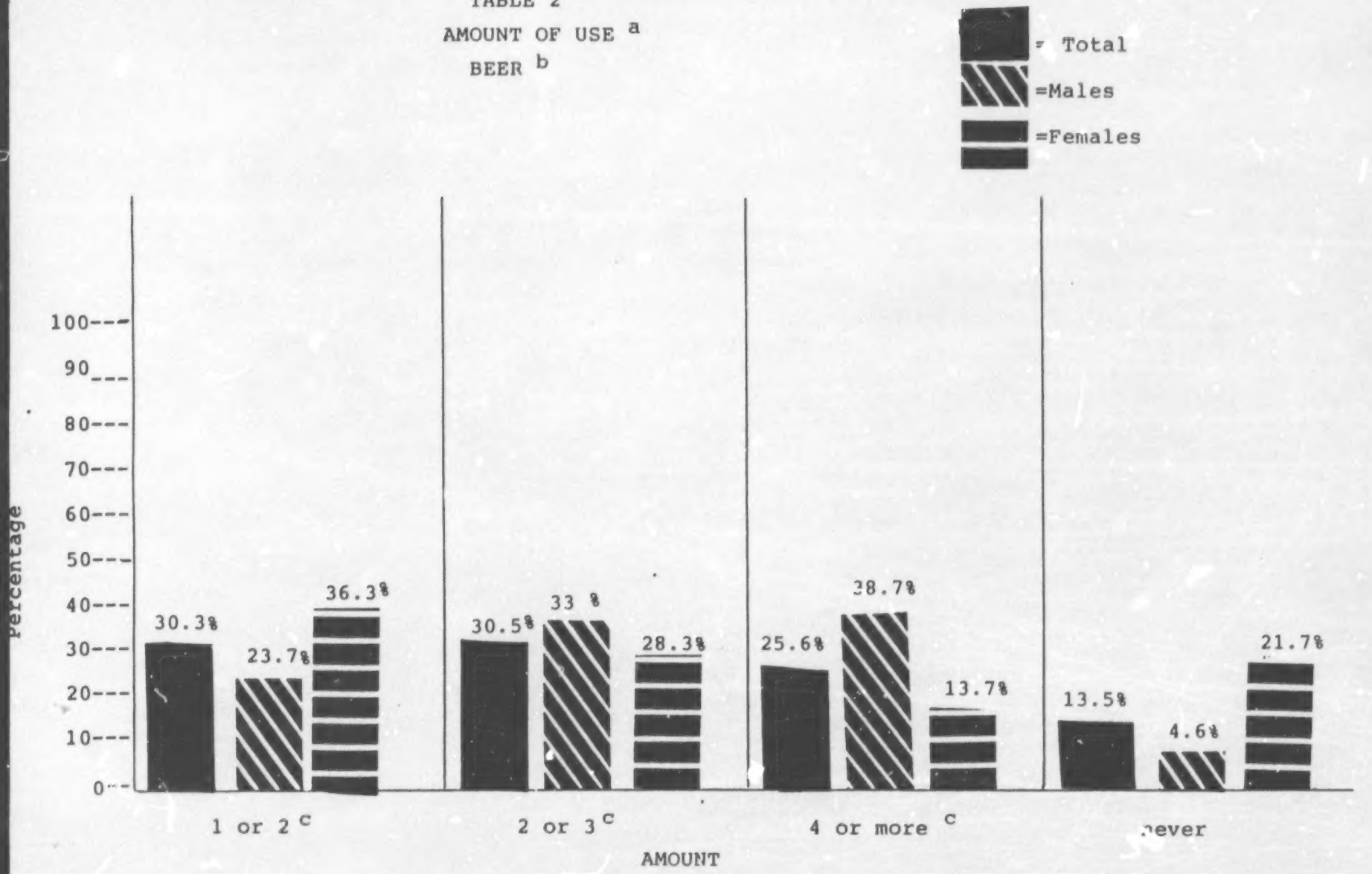
Full or Part time Employment

Yes	223	49%
No	233	51%

TABLE 2

AMOUNT OF USE [a]

BEER [b]



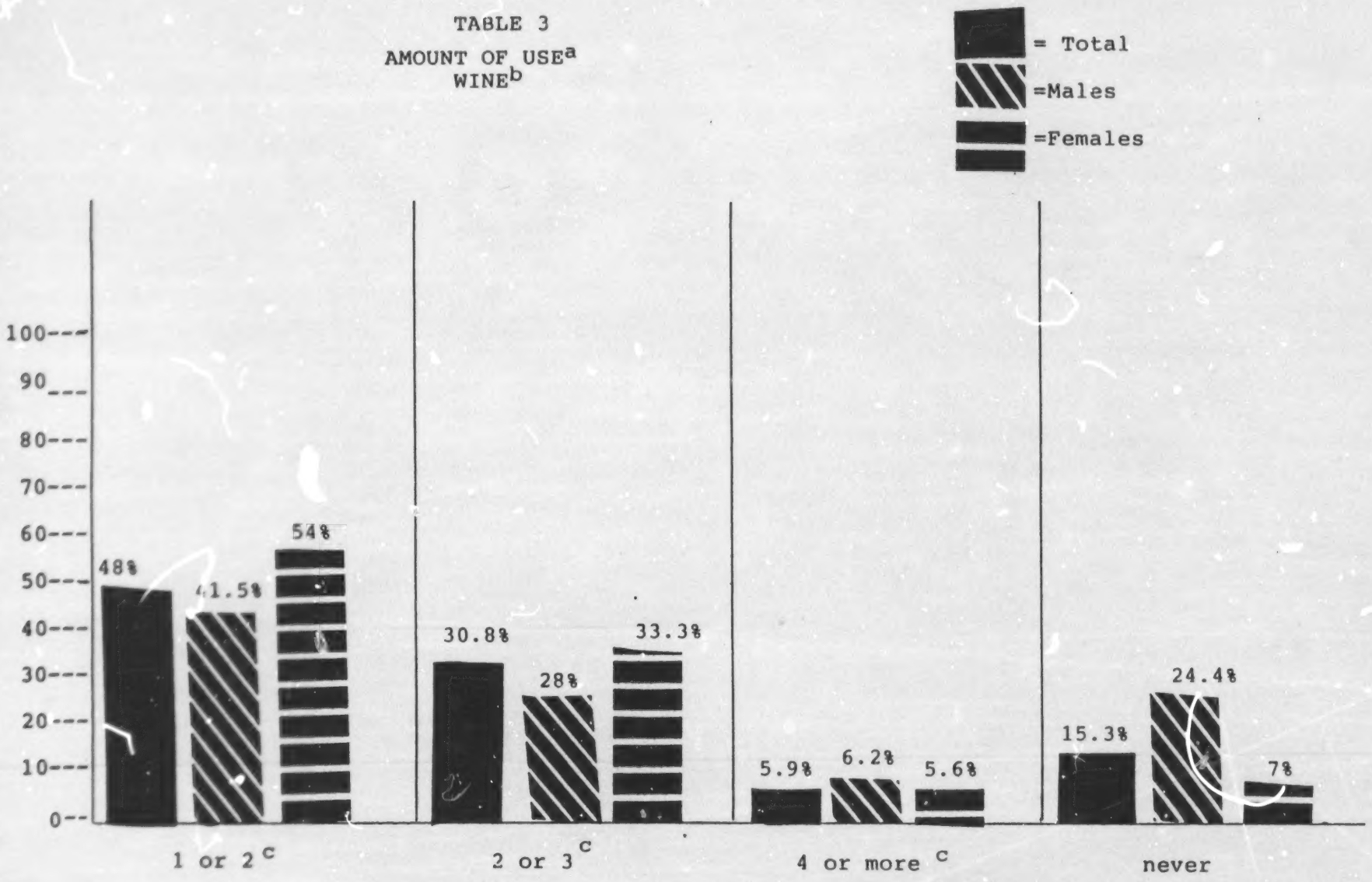
a. Amount consumed per drinking occasion

b. Amount=12oz. can

c. Number of 12 oz. cans per drinking occasion.

TABLE 3

AMOUNT OF USE[a]
WINE[b]



a. Amount consumed per drinking occasion

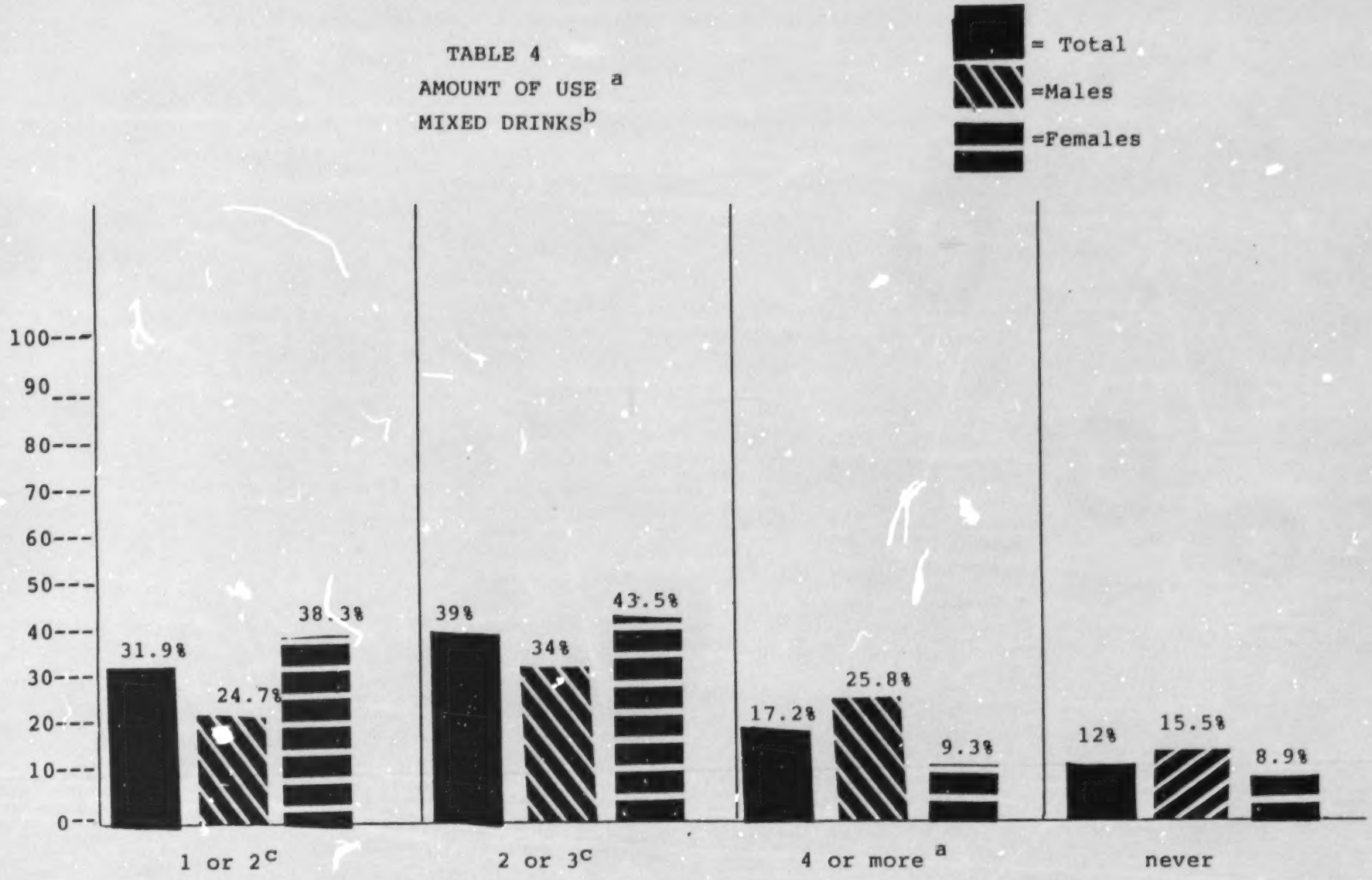
b. Amount 5oz. glasses

c. Number of glasses per drinking occasion

TABLE 4

AMOUNT OF USE [a]

MIXED DRINKS[b]



a= Amount consumed per drinking occasion

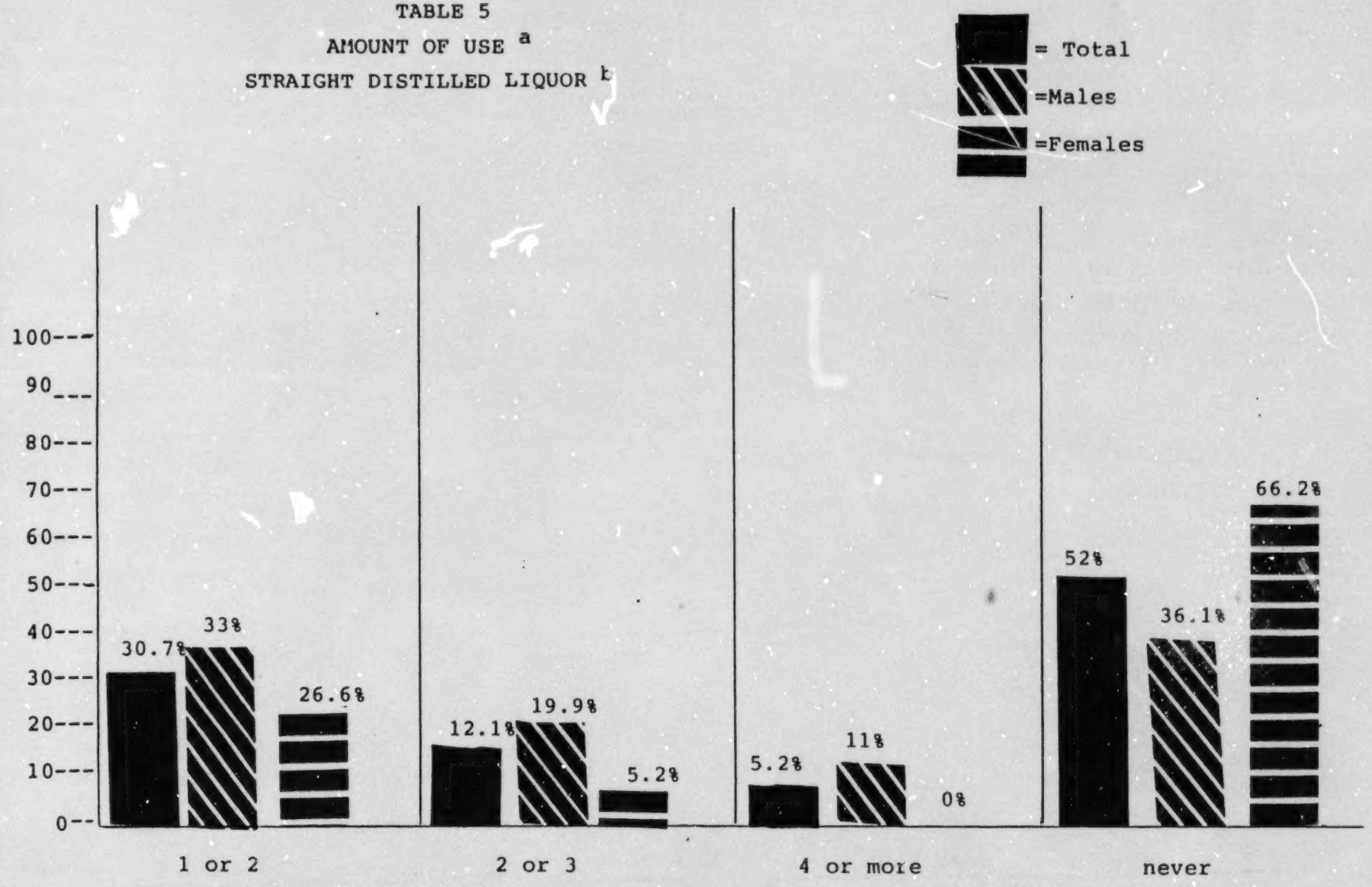
b= Amount=number of mixed drinks

c= Number of mixed drinks per drinking occasion

TABLE 5

AMOUNT OF USE [a]

STRAIGHT DISTILLED LIQUOR [b]



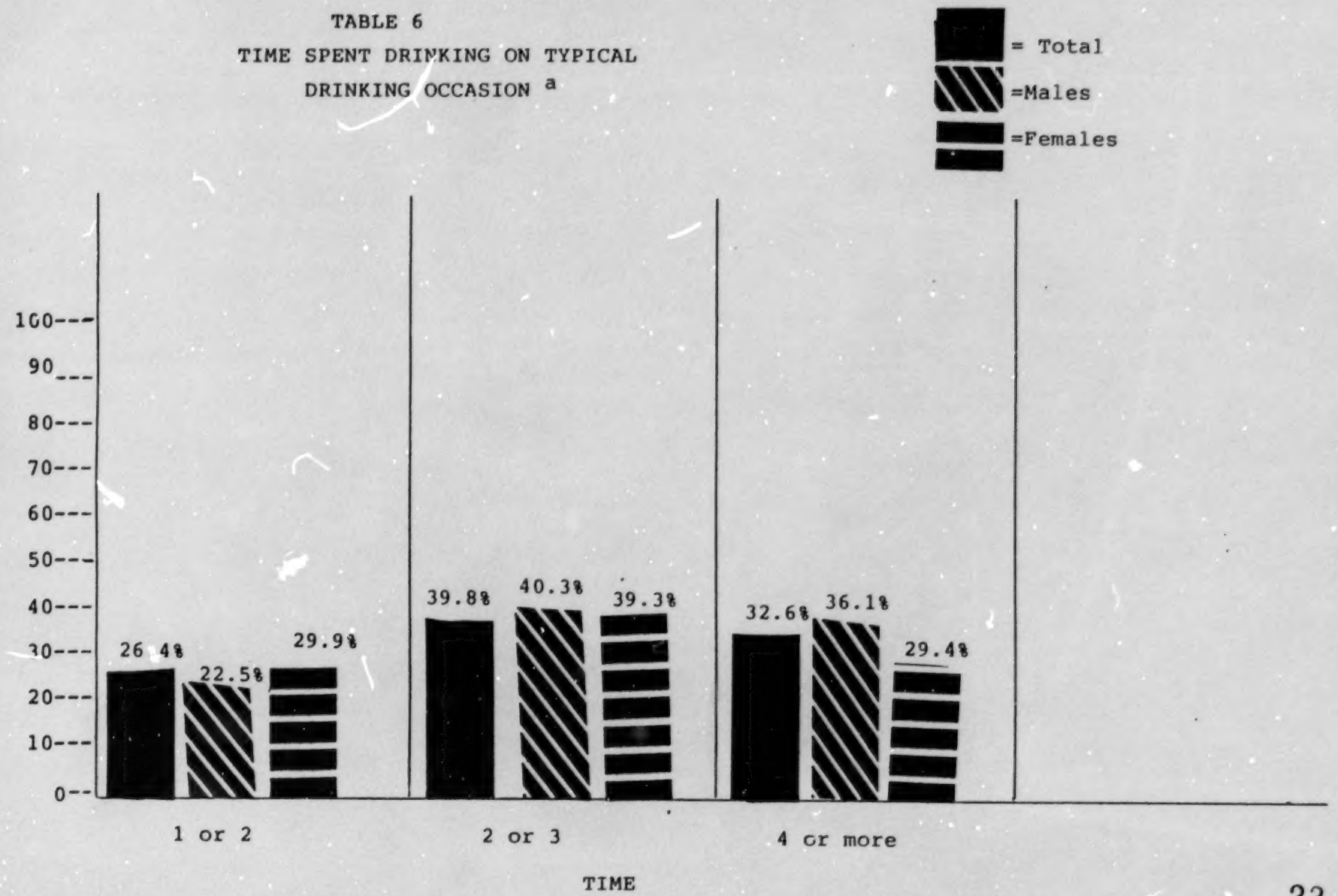
a= Amount consumed per drinking occasion.

b=Amount=1½ oz. drinks

c=number of 1½oz. drinks per drinking occasion

TABLE 6

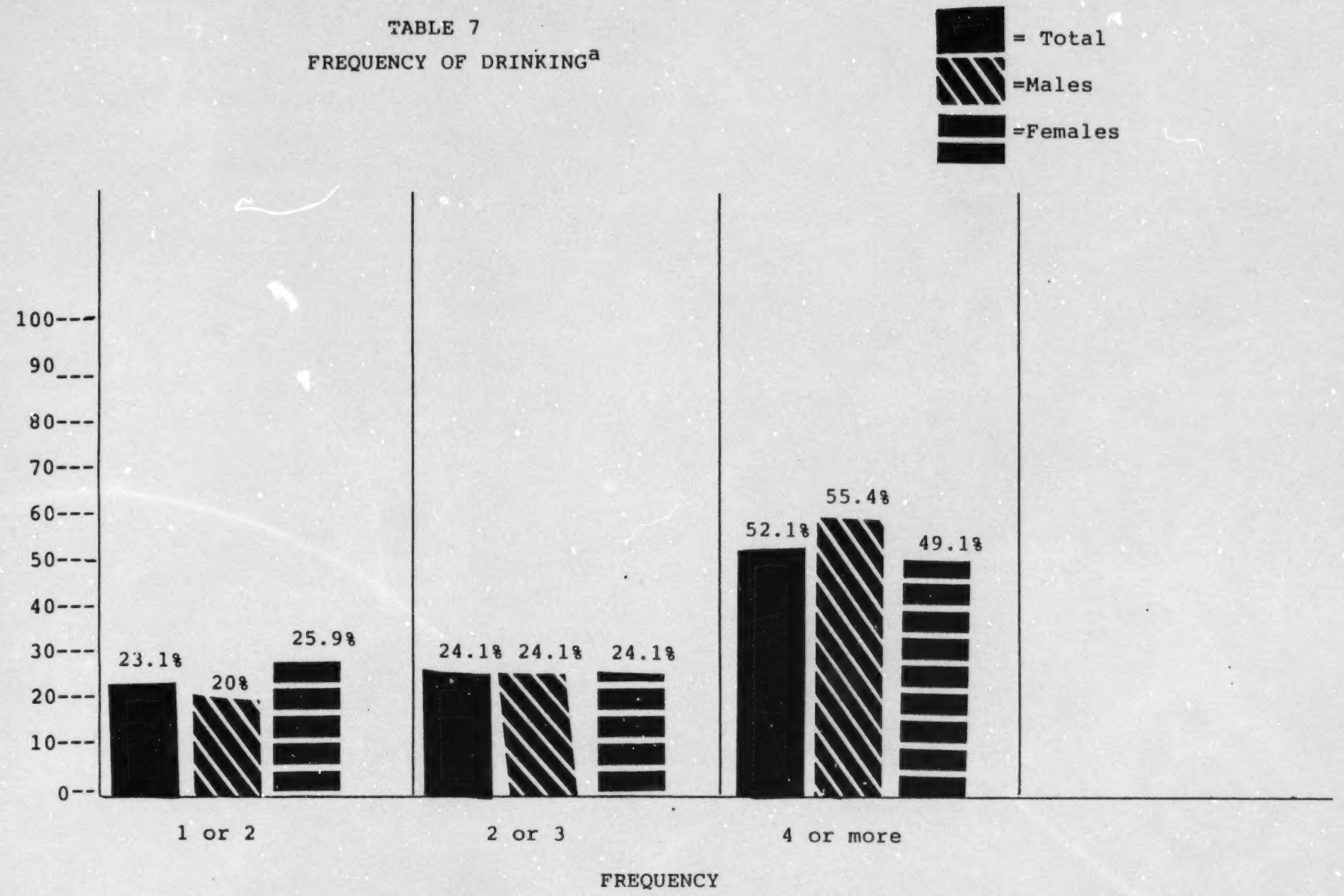
TIME SPENT DRINKING ON TYPICAL DRINKING OCCASION [a]



a. Time = number of hours

TABLE 7

FREQUENCY OF DRINKING[a]



a. Frequency = Times per month

TABLE 8

DRINKING BEHAVIORS [a]
(Percent)

	1 times [a]			2 times [a]			3 times [a]			4 or more times [a]		
	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
"have had a hangover"	15.9	16.0	15.9	15.9	13.4	18.2	10.3	12.9	7.9	30.1	36.1	24.8
"have driven a car when I knew I had too much to drink"	15.6	14.4	16.8	6.6	7.7	5.6	3.7	6.7	.9	9.5	15.4	4.2
"have missed a class because of a hangover"	10.8	11.8	9.8	5.9	4.1	7.5	1.7	2.1	1.4	9.8	12.3	7.5
"have damaged property, pulled a fire alarm or other such actions after drinking"	4.2	7.2	1.4	3.7	6.7	.9	.7	1.5	0	2.2	4.6	0
"did not remember what happened while I was drinking"	17.4	15.4	19.2	8.6	8.2	8.9	3.3	2.1	4.2	7.1	11.8	2.8
"have done something while drinking which I later regretted"	20.8	20.0	21.6	12.3	12.8	11.7	5.4	6.7	4.2	8.1	11.3	5.2

a. time=during the past year

TABLE 9

DRINKING ATTITUDES

Percent

	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
"for escape from daily problems or school"	3.2	4.6	1.9	16.6	13.8	19.2	19.3	21.0	16.9	60.9	59.7	62.0
"to relax and have fun"	66.6	64.3	68.7	23.7	27	20.6	3.4	2.0	4.7	6.3	6.6	6.1
""for the taste"	26.7	23.5	29.6	46.9	48.5	45.5	13.2	15.3	11.3	13.2	12.8	13.6
"to get high or drunk	13.5	20.2	7.5	25.9	23.8	27.7	23.6	22.8	24.4	36.9	33.2	40.4
"use alcohol as the primary focus of a socializing event"	10.1	14.4	6.1	31.2	35.6	27.2	23.1	22.7	23.5	35.6	27.3	43.2
"chug drinks for the stronger effect"	2.5	3.6	1.4	9.8	10.8	8.9	24.5	28.7	20.7	63.2	56.9	69.0
"drink alcohol primarily to get drunk"	8.6	14.4	3.3	15.6	21.0	10.7	27.9	23.6	31.8	47.9	41.0	54.2
	very likely			somewhat likely			somewhat unlikely			very unlikely		

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